

# Allama Mashriqi, His Family & the Khaksars Paid the Price for Freedom

*On Mashriqi's 52<sup>nd</sup> Death Anniversary and the Anniversary of the End of British Rule in the Sub-continent*

By Nasim Yousaf

*History has shown that freedom comes at a steep cost to those who fight to liberate a nation from oppression. Allama Mashriqi, his family, and the Khaksars paid the price for the freedom of the subcontinent through their tremendous sacrifices for the nation.*

In 1930, Allama Mashriqi, a legendary freedom fighter, founded the Khaksar Tehrik to liberate the subcontinent (now comprised of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan) from the clutches of foreign rule. The Tehrik was a private army based on the principles of social service, brotherhood, and discipline. The movement's message of justice, equality and freedom resonated with the masses and it quickly spread across India. By 1940, the Tehrik was the most powerful and disciplined private army in all the region and was comprised of millions of members. Through demonstrations, marches, camps, pamphlets, speeches, Khaksar newspapers (e.g. "Al-Islah"), and other activities, the Khaksars had mobilized the masses for freedom.

Recognizing the Tehrik's growing power and influence, the British Government desperately tried to crush the movement from the very beginning. In 1932, they barred Mashriqi from entering the North West Frontier Province (now *Khyber Pakhtunkhwa*) - the ban continued until 1937. And later, in 1940, when Mashriqi was on the verge of ending British rule, police killed many Khaksars in a brutal assault (on March 19, 1940) and arrested Mashriqi and his elder sons. Authorities also raided Mashriqi's house and cruelly injured Mashriqi's son Ehsanullah Khan Aslam. The news of

Mashriqi's arrest and the massacre of the Khaksars spread worldwide and was reported on the radio and in print media (in India, Australia, Germany, UK, USA, and other international outlets).

The massacre of Khaksars on March 19 was a *black day and a turning point* in the history of India. The horrific actions of the Government created tremendous public outrage and further compelled the masses to drive for freedom; the Khaksars and their followers were now even more determined to attain independence for the nation. Seeing the movement as a grave threat to their rule, the British further intensified their efforts against Mashriqi and the Khaksars. Planning meetings were held by the British Government to try to preserve their rule and the Government launched massive efforts to crush the Khaksar Movement. They banned the Khaksar Tehrik (first in Punjab and later in the entire India) and its "Al-Islah" newspaper. Police raided Khaksar offices across India and seized or impounded Khaksar materials. Many seized Khaksar materials were also sent to the Viceroy of India and other high-level British officials in India and England. Thousands of Khaksars and Mashriqi's sympathizers were arrested, injured, or killed and several were sentenced to life imprisonment. The Khaksars, whether in jail or not, were persecuted and their families harassed. Many were falsely accused – without any proof of violent activity – of being terrorists or "fifth columnists." All along, the Secretary of State and Viceroy of India were actively involved. The Viceroy held a meeting with the British Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army and other British high-ups and discussed ways to crush the Khaksar Tehrik. The authorities made desperate efforts to try to implicate and defame Mashriqi and his organization; even though the Government found no credible evidence against him, Mashriqi was kept imprisoned without a court trial for a long period of time, as the British knew that no other organization posed a greater danger to their rule in India.

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As God is One, we respect all Religions  
Telephone: (07) 3865 6533 Fax: (07) 3865 5864  
E-mail: [print@indiantimes.com.au](mailto:print@indiantimes.com.au)

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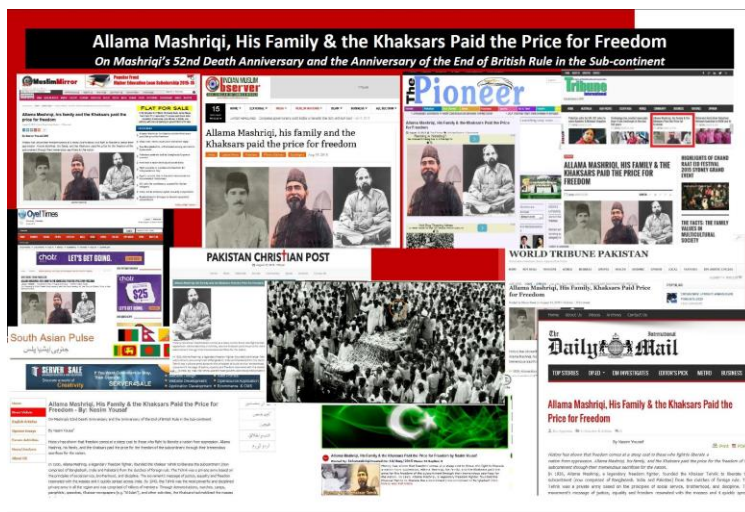
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Thenceforth, the British Government made desperate efforts to try to implicate and defame Mashriqi and his organization; even though the Government found no credible evidence against him, Mashriqi was kept imprisoned without a court trial for a long period of time, as the British knew that no other organization posed a greater danger to their rule in India.





Beyond their actions against the Khaksar organization, the British also tried to attack Mashriqi on a personal level. Mashriqi was kept in solitary confinement at Vellore Central Jail. The Government confiscated his accounts and property. For this reason, Mashriqi's son (Ehsanullah Khan Aslam), who was injured during the police raid on March 19<sup>th</sup>, was not able to obtain proper medical treatment; he eventually succumbed to his injuries and died on May 31, 1940. He was buried in Lahore; Mashriqi was not allowed to be with his family during this time nor to take a final glimpse of his son. Meanwhile, other members of his family and followers were harassed or tortured. The lives of his young daughters (Hameedhah, Mehmoodah, and Masuda, who were from

his first wife, Wilayat Begum) and wives were threatened. Mashriqi wrote:

*"The most recent and the crowning addition to the above tyrannies is an anonymous letter posted from clearing Charing Cross Post Office Lahore on the 4th July 1941-delivered to me on the 11th July-threatening the life of my ladies at Ichhra!...In the distress that I have felt over the threat and the insult, also in the helplessness to which I have been reduced, I have no alternative but to put this also to the credit of the Government who have taken possession of my body most unjustly and have reduced me to this state."*

Despite the atrocities against him, Mashriqi remained resolute and ultimately decided to begin a fast unto death while in prison to continue the push for freedom and obtain his and the Khaksars' release. When he was on the verge of death, the Government finally released him (although they still restricted his movements).

Ultimately, in spite of the Government's best efforts, they could not stop Mashriqi and the Khaksars' determination to bring freedom. The Khaksar resistance and anti-imperialist activities pushed the Government to the point where they had no choice but to leave the sub-continent. The sub-continent thus obtained its independence and Pakistan and India emerged on the world map (for a detailed account, read the author's published works).

Mashriqi continued fighting for justice for many years following independence. He died in Mayo Hospital in Lahore on August 27, 1963. With his death, a vital chapter of South Asian history was closed. News of his death spread like wildfire; special bulletins by major newspapers were published and distributed in the streets of Pakistan. The day after his death, nearly all the newspapers in the country (including *Dawn*, *Pakistan Times*, *Jang*, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, *Kohistan*, *Imroze*, *Mashriq*, *The Eastern Times*, and others) featured the news in front-page headlines. International media also reported of Mashriqi's death. Mashriqi's millions of followers and supporters around the world were grief-stricken. Condolence messages poured in from prominent leaders, including the President of Pakistan (Ayub Khan), and from supporters all over the globe. Airplanes, buses, cars, and trucks full of people arrived in Lahore to attend Mashriqi's funeral procession, which was over a mile-long and included more than 100,000 people. All along the route, people showered Mashriqi's body with flowers. Many wept and some even fainted when they caught a glimpse of the departed leader. Mashriqi was accorded a military-style burial by the Khaksars, who wrapped his body in the Khaksar Tehrik's flag, gave him a guard of honor, and honored him with a 101-gun salute (Note: the author, Nasim Yousaf, was in attendance at the funeral and has provided a detailed account in his book entitled "Allama Mashriqi & Dr. Akhtar Hameed Khan: Two Legends of Pakistan." Also visit the following Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/AllamaMashriqi.1>).

Mashriqi, his family, and the Khaksars paid a very heavy price for the freedom of the people of the sub-continent. They endured all atrocities – whether arrests, bans, threats, restrictions, torture, attacks, etc. – to achieve their objective. Throughout his long and illustrious career, Mashriqi was arrested approximately six times and his movements were restricted at least twice. He was also attacked a number of times and stabbed in 1947; he survived



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